

GOOD NEWS FOR THE DESTITUTE

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A SERMON
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“He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.”
Psalms 102:17.

OBSERVE that the verse which precedes the text describes the Lord as appearing in His glory. His Zion is to be built up, and therefore her King puts on the robes of His splendor. The imagery sets forth the Lord as a great monarch, superintending with great pomp and state, the building of a sumptuous palace. We see Him commanding the architects and the workmen, and passing from point to point amid attending courtiers. Trumpets are sounding, banners are displayed, princes and nobles glitter in their array and the King appears in His glory. But who is this, whose mournful wail disturbs the harmony? Where does this ragged beggar who bows before the Prince come from? Surely he will be dragged away by the soldiers, or cast into prison by the wardens for daring to pollute so grand a ceremony by such wretched presumption! Were there not streets, lanes, and dark corners enough for beggars? Why need he thrust himself in where his rags are so out of place? But look, the King hears him; the sound of the trumpet has not drowned the voice of the destitute. His Majesty listens to him while he asks for alms and in matchless compassion pities all his groans. Who is this King, but Jehovah? Of Him, only, is it said, “He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.” The verse is enhanced in its beauty by its connection, even as a fair jewel receives an added beauty from the lovely neck upon which it sparkles. Let us read the verse, again, in this soft silver light. “When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.” It is clear that the heart of the Lord delights in the cries of needy souls, and nothing can prevent His hearing them. No occupation is so sublime as to distract the Lord’s attention from the prayer of the most humble of His mourners. The songs of seraphs, the symphonies of angels, the ceaseless chorales of the redeemed are not sweeter in the ears of the all-merciful Jehovah than the faint breathings of poor dying wretches who confess themselves condemned by His justice, and, therefore, appeal to His loving-kindness and tender mercy.

This morning I am going to preach about the destitute. I hope there are many of them here. At any rate many are here who once were destitute, and would be so now, if it were not for the riches of divine grace. Hear me, you poor in spirit, and may the Lord comfort you by my words. Our first work, this morning, shall be to speak about a *spiritual pauper*, the “destitute.” Then we will talk of *his special occupation*—it is clear that he has taken to begging, for the text speaks twice of his prayer, and prayer is the essence of begging. Then, thirdly, here is a *very natural fear* of this spiritual beggar, namely, that his prayer will not be regarded, and will even be despised. And then, fourthly, the whole text is a *most comfortable assurance* to this spiritual beggar that his begging will be successful, for the Lord of whom he begs will regard his prayer, and will not despise his supplication.

I. First, then, let us go down among the beggars, and look upon THE SPIRITUAL PAUPER. It will do you good to have your spiritual gentility shocked for a while, and it will be a lasting benefit if you are made to feel anew, your own poverty, and to cry, “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.”

The spiritual pauper is, in our text, described as *destitute*, and you may take the word in its extreme sense—the spiritually poor man is not only positively, but utterly, thoroughly, terribly destitute. He is destitute of all wealth of *merit* or possession of righteousness. Time was, years ago, when he was as good as anybody else, in his own esteem, and perhaps a little better. He was rich, and increased in goods, and had need of nothing. True, he had some faults, but he considered them to be outweighed by

his excellences, and if he fell sometimes, into error and sin, he had most ingenious excuses with which to shift the blame—either some companion beguiled him, or else his circumstances necessitated the fault. He was a sinner, he admitted that, but he put his own meaning upon the title, so that he did not feel degraded by it. He was no vagrant or pauper in the universe of God, but rather a fellow citizen with the worthy, and of the household of self-satisfaction. He was at least as good as the average of men, and possibly better than, under present circumstances, men may generally be expected to be. And if he did not actually claim anything of God by way of merit, it was because he deferred to the books of the Protestant religion. But in his inmost soul he really thought he could have maintained a decent position on the score of good works, and have shown up a very presentable righteousness had it been asked for. He never did, in his heart, see anything amiss in the Pharisee's prayer, "God I thank You that I am not as other men are." He, himself, reflected with a very great deal of comfort upon the fact that he had never been a drunk, that no profane word had dropped from his mouth, that he had been upright in his business, and that to all intents and purposes he was a reputable and respectable man, worthy of the divine regard. This, however, is all changed. The man has come down from an emperor to a penniless beggar. His outward character may not have changed, but his own estimate of himself is as different as light from darkness. Now he sees the hollowness of an outward morality which does not proceed from a renewed heart. Now he knows that the sins which he has committed are exceedingly sinful, and that the religious professions he has made, are nothing better than mere pretences, the heart not going with them, were a mockery of God, and an insult to the Most High. See him, then, you rich men. Here was one of you, richer than most and far superior to the majority. But now he is as poor as the unfeathered bird which cruelty has flung from its nest. He has no good work that he dares bring before his God, but he admits to ten thousands of sins, every one of which accuses him before the Most High, and demands punishment at the hands of justice. He feels this, and shivers in his wretched rags. Do you inquire, "Where is he?" Is he not here at this moment? Can I not see his tears, and hear his groans? "God be merciful to me, a sinner," is his cry. He is so far from claiming anything like merit, that he loathes the very thought of self-righteousness, feeling himself to be guilty, undeserving, ill-deserving, and hell-deserving, meriting only to be banished from the presence of God forever.

There is a kind of destitution which is bearable. A man may be quite penniless, but he may be so accustomed to it that he does not care. He may even be happier in rags and filth than in any other condition. Persons of this order are well known to the guardians of our workhouses. Have you ever seen the *lazzaroni* of Naples? Notwithstanding all their attempts to move your compassion, they generally fail after you have once seen them lying on their backs in the sun, amusing themselves the whole day. You feel sure that beggary is their natural element. They are perfectly satisfied to be beggars, like their fathers, and to bring up their sons to the profession. The ease of poverty suits their constitutions. But the spiritual pauper is not a member of this free and easy *lazzaroni* club by any manner of means, he is destitute of *contentment*. The poverty which is upon him is one which he cannot endure, or for a moment rest under. It is a heavy yoke to him; he sighs and cries under it. His is hungering and thirsting after righteousness. He knows there is something better than the state into which he has fallen, and he pines for it. He knows that if he does not escape from his present condition, he will fall into woes infinitely worse, and he trembles at the grim prospect of it. Therefore he sighs and cries before God in bitterness of spirit, "Have mercy upon Your poor destitute creature! Have mercy upon Your undeserving servant." He has no contentment in his poverty; his penury is irksome to the last degree and he cannot complacently endure it.

A man, however, if he is without money, is still not utterly destitute if he has *strength*, a stout pair of limbs, and can work and earn wages. Such a man will soon get out of his destitution. Only give him a chance, and those rags will be exchanged for decent attire. He will no longer be skin and bones, he will improve into a good condition; only give him employment and fair pay. But this is not the case with the spiritual pauper. He has no merit, and he cannot earn any. His strength is gone. Once he was so strong that he used to think if heaven were to be merited by good works, he could do it, or if not, if eternal life were to be had by conversion and by believing in Christ, he could be converted at any time, and believe

in Jesus just whenever he liked. Religion appeared to him to be a very easy matter. “Only believe, and you shall be saved”—could that be managed in the twinkling of an eye? If ever he heard a sermon about, “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there are that find it,” he disliked the doctrine and the preacher. He could not agree with such narrow-minded views. He felt that he had all requisite spiritual power within himself, and he did not believe either in natural depravity or spiritual inability. He had done well in business, and was a self-made man. He had worked himself up from the lowest ranks into an honorable position, and surely he could do the same in the matters of his soul as in the affairs of the world. That gentleman is not one of the destitute, you clearly see. And I have nothing to say to him except that I pray God to take away his fancied power from him, and make him feel himself to be weak as water. The spiritual pauper feels that he can do nothing right, and that he cannot even think a good thought without the help of divine grace. As to believing in Jesus, simple as that matter is, he has come to this pass—

*“I would, but can’t believe,
Then all would easy be.
I would but cannot, Lord, relieve,
My help must come from Thee.”*

He is so staggered with doubts and fears, and so bemisted and beclouded with dark remembrances of his past sins, that he does not seem able to fix his eyes upon the atoning sacrifice, and to find comfort there. He is destitute, in the very worst sense, because he is “without strength.”

Still, a man may be very poor at present, and he may have no power to earn his bread, but he may not be utterly destitute, for he may have an estate in *reserve*. When his long-lived uncle dies, he may come into a fortune. It may be that in some years’ time, if the steed can live till then, the grass will be up to its knees. Many a man pressingly needs present help, though by-and-by, he will have enough to spare. The spiritual pauper has nothing to look forward to which can at all alleviate his soul’s distress. His future is even gloomier than his present. Well do I remember when I looked out upon eternity, and saw nothing but a fearful prospect of judgment and fiery indignation for me. I peered into the future, and I could not expect to live a better life, for I had so often tried and failed that I feared I might be left to a callous conscience, and go from bad to worse. In fact, I knew I would unless Christ would interpose and save me. And as for my hope in another world, alas, alas! I saw nothing but the great white throne, an angry Judge, and everlasting fire in hell. I had no hopes, but numberless fears. Such is the outlook of every man whom God really convinces of sin. He is stripped of hope itself, and the man who has lost hope has lost all, and he is destitute with a vengeance. For him there remains neither in heaven nor on earth any hope whatever, unless he can obtain one as the gift of grace. He has indeed, reason to cry unto his God.

A man who is spiritually destitute is destitute of all *friends* who can help him. For those, who love him best can only pray for him, they cannot save him. We who would help him, if we could, can only point him to the Savior. But he has blind eyes, and how shall he see while he is in the dark?

He is also destitute of all *plans* for doing better. Schemers sometimes manage to live by their wits when they can no longer subsist by their hands, but the poor soul who is really destitute before God has not even a plan by which to help himself. All his schemes have turned into mere wind bags, and his hopes from his own wisdom have altogether failed him. He has, in fact, nothing left; nothing whatever. He is as naked as Adam and Eve beneath the trees of the garden when God, their offended Maker, met them, and they sought to cover themselves with fig leaves. He has come to the very lowest degree of spiritual penury. It is only necessary for death to put an end to his present misery for him to be in the ruin that will never end. Such is the case of the spiritually destitute.

I do not know whether I have managed to depict in any way, the state of any really distressed conscience here. I have tried to do so, but if I have failed, allow me to add another sentence or two. If any in this place feel that they are sinful, feel that they deserve the wrath of God, feel that they cannot help themselves, feel that unless infinite mercy shall interpose they must forever be lost, if, moreover, they cannot find any reason why they should be saved, cannot find any argument which could move the heart

of justice to have pity on them, they are just the very persons intended by my description and by the text. I pray them not to put away from them the comfort which the text contains, but listen to it as we read it again—"He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer."

So much, then, for the spiritual pauper.

II. Secondly, here is HIS SUITABLE OCCUPATION—he has taken to *begging*, and it is a very fitting occupation for him. Indeed, there is nothing else he can do. When a man is shut up to one course, it is useless to raise objections to his following it, for necessity has no law, and hunger will break through stone walls. The man can do nothing else but beg. And so, since we cannot let him perish, and he will not perish through lethargy, he turns to do the only thing he can do, namely, to begging and praying. Blessed is that soul which is shut up to prayer. It thinks itself accursed, but indeed now, the blessing is come upon it. If you feel you cannot do anything but pray, and equally feel that you must pray, I have hopes for you. If now, you dare not appeal to justice, but simply cry, "Mercy, Lord! Mercy, mercy! I have no merits, but, oh, forgive me for Your mercy's sake." I am right glad of it. Why, dear friends, you are shut up in the very same place where David was shut up when he could only say, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your loving-kindness, according to the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions." You are shut up where every soul has been shut up that ever was saved, for unless you are driven to admit that nothing can save you but undeserved mercy, pity, and free grace, you have not come to the place where God can meet with you in pardon. But when you stand as a condemned criminal at the bar and plead, "Guilty, guilty, guilty," then you stand where God can look upon you with an eye of pity, and will save you.

The trade of begging is one which is most suitable for a spiritual pauper. Because if he cannot do anything else, I guarantee you he can do this right well. They say in London that many of our beggars are mere actors, they mimic distress. If so, they do it uncommonly well, and are splendid imitators. But I will venture to say that nobody will ask for help as well as the man whose distress is real. He needs no one to teach him, starvation is his tutor. Take away his diffidence, and give him enough courage, and his distress will make him eloquent. You may, by chance, have been accosted by a man who sought alms with awful eagerness, starvation looking out of his eyes, and speaking from his pinched countenance. He has held onto you with terrible vehemence, and at last has said, "I have not eaten anything for many hours." You can see by his very looks that it is true. And he adds, "I could bear to famish myself, but I have seven little children at home, and unless I take them bread, they will be crying about me, and, therefore, I do entreat you to help me." Now, if all this is true, and you look into the case and find it so, the man's case speaks for itself, and he is the man to move your heart. He does not need to go to a boarding school to learn elocution, need schools his tongue. The words drop into their right places of themselves, and as to his gestures and postures, they are all apt and telling, though no teacher of rhetoric ever gave him a lesson. He will be sure to plead rightly, the suit lies heavy on his heart. Nobody prays before God like a man who feels his sins. He cries, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," and says it as it ought to be said. Ah, brethren, some of us have to pray often in public, but we never pray as well as when we feel your needs and the needs of the times, and of the country pressing urgently upon our hearts. You, yourselves, pray best when your own sense of sin and need most burden your souls. You are the men to pray, I say, you destitute people. You make the best of beggars, for you are most in need. You pray best who feel that you must have mercy or die.

There is this to be said about the spiritual beggar, he is begging where he is permitted to beg. I remember being in Paris on a certain day in the year, I forget the name of the *festival*, and I was astonished at the immense number of beggars, and at their perseverance and daring. I had not observed them before, in such swarms and such force, but I found that on one special day license was given to the poor, the lame, and the blind to persecute everybody for alms. I guarantee you they made good use of the permission, and needed no pressing or inviting. Oh, spiritual paupers, this day, even this day, is a day of grace. A warrant has come from the King's court that you may ask, and it shall be given you. You may seek, and you shall find. You may knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Yes, every day is a free-grace day, a festival for prayer. As long as you live and are in need, you have the King's permit to open your mouth

wide, and He will fill it. You have His royal authority that you may come to His mercy seat and ask in every time of need right boldly for whatever you want. Well may the spiritual pauper, take to a trade, which is permitted by the King of Heaven. He is beggar by appointment to the King's Most Excellent Majesty.

Yes, more, spiritual begging is commanded by supreme authority. "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." It is the privilege of a sinner to be allowed to ask for grace. It is also the duty of the sinner to seek mercy at the Savior's hand. "Acquaint, now, yourself with Him, and be at peace." "Seek you the Lord while He may be found; call you upon Him while He is near." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." These are promises, but they are also precepts, precepts with the weight of commands. Oh, who that is poor will be slow to beg when the Lord of love, Himself, commands him to ask? At the back of this there is an implied certainty. There is a sacred promise that he who asks shall surely receive, for God would not tantalize us by commanding us to pray if He had not at the same time, intended to give.

Let me further remind every spiritually destitute man here that he may pray with confidence, because begging has been the source of all the riches of the saints. Some of them are rolling in heavenly wealth, for all things are theirs. Their mouths are satisfied with good things, and their hearts are filled with gladness. You may see their riches, for the joy of their countenances, and the bliss of their daily work is visible to all. Do you not envy them, for they feed on Christ every day, and have the bread of heaven always on their tables, and the water of life always flowing at their feet? Do you know how they became so rich? I will whisper it in your ear. They gained all they have by begging. "Not very creditable to them," you say. No, but wonderfully creditable to Him who gave them all they have. And they are accustomed to give the entire honor and the glory to that dear and blessed, and generous Savior, who has never denied them their requests. If the richest saint on earth were to take you into his spiritual mansion, he would say to you, "Do you see this treasure, and that covenant blessing, and yonder priceless gifts? I obtained all these by begging. I asked, and I received. All that I have came to me in that way." The Lord has said, "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Now, since all the saints on earth have grown rich by begging, I recommend you poor, destitute souls to take to the business, and you will find it the most lucrative one that ever you undertook. You cannot dig, do not be ashamed to beg. Your digging will dig your own grave, that is all you will do by your self-righteous efforts; but you will obtain grace for the asking, pardon for the asking, and heaven for the asking. Who would not be a spiritual beggar when he may be thus enriched?

One thing more I will say, and leave this point. You may begin begging at once. You, who are poor in spirit, may begin begging right now. I could not start in some trades tomorrow morning, I would need the capital, and should need to go to the wholesale traders and get what I needed to stock me in the trade. But a beggar needs neither stock nor capital to begin with. All his capital lies in his need of capital. He never makes a good beggar till he has nothing left, and then when his clothes are rags and his shoes are old and worn out, and he himself looks sick and wan, then he is the man for his business. And you, sinner, you need no preparations in order to ask for mercy. Nothing need be done in you, or for you, in order to prepare you for the mercy of Christ. You may come to Him just as you are. Tarry not to mend, or wash, or cleanse, come in your foulness, come in your rags, come in your loathsomeness. Come just as you are. The worse you are, the more room for the display of the wonders of divine grace—

*"Cast your guilty soul on Him,
Find Him mighty to redeem.
At His feet your burden lay,
Look your doubts and cares away.
Now by faith the Son embrace,
Plead His promise, trust His grace."*

Still, perhaps, there will be some here who say, "I do not feel in a fit state to ask for mercy." My dear friends, it is your unfitness that is your fitness. Your poverty fits you for alms, your sickness fits you for

the physician, your being nothing fits you to have Christ made all in all to you. Your emptiness is all He wants, that He may fill it with all the fullness of His grace. Take to begging, that is the way to be rich towards God.

III. But now, thirdly, here is THE BEGGAR'S VERY NATURAL FEAR. He is afraid that the great King will despise his prayers, or will not regard them. And he is afraid of this, first, from the greatness and holiness of that God to whom he addresses himself. He is thrice holy. Will He regard the cry of one who has been a drunk or a harlot? He is infinitely great, and fills immensity. Will He listen to the prayers of a poor little boy or of a gray-headed old rebel, whose only inheritance is a place in the work-house? Can He look on such an insignificant worm as I am, the creature of a day, and whose non-existence would make no flaw in the universe; whose damnation would be no loss to Him? Can He look on worthless me? Infinite, and yet listen to my sigh? Eternal, and yet catch my tears? Can it be? Beloved, many are a long while in distress of soul because they do not remember that there is a Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. God is thus glorious, but He is not far from any of us, for there is one who is God, and at the same time a man like ourselves, even Jesus, who has compassion on the ignorant and on those who are out of the way. Stop then, your fearing, for the gulf is bridged. You may approach the Lord, for Jesus has paved the way.

The same fear takes another shape. Trembling souls are afraid that God can never look upon them in love, because their prayer itself is so unworthy of notice. "I would not wonder if God despised my prayer," says one, "for my fellow men despise it. I should not like them to hear it. It is such a broken, disconnected affair. I could not expect my own parents to have patience with it. And when I get up from my knees, I despise my own prayer, and hardly dare think I have prayed. I feel I have tried and failed. I have only groaned because I could not groan, and mourned because I could not mourn." Ah, yes, but the Lord looks at the heart, and He does not regard the eloquence or the style of prayer after the manner of man. The Pharisee's was a very fine prayer I dare say, and very well delivered. The poor publican's prayer was a very poor affair by the side of it, and rather undelivered than delivered, for he would not so much as lift his eyes towards heaven, but the Lord heard it and had mercy upon him. Go and groan before God that is praying. Go and weep before Him that is praying. You need not get the book down and turn up a liturgy. I do not know of one that would quite suit a sinner in utter destitution. Men seldom use book prayers when they come before God in real earnest. Forms will suffice for playing at praying, but when you come to real earnest work with God, you have to put your books away. And you have to plead with the Lord with the first words that fly forth from your soul, like sparks from a piece of hot iron beaten with the hammer. When the heart boils and swells with grief, then prayers roll down from the soul like lava from Vesuvius, because it cannot help running over and burning its way. That is the way to pray. May God help us to pray out of our very souls, and then it matters not what form the prayer takes, for it is beautiful before the Most High.

"Yes," says one, "but I am afraid my prayer may be disregarded because my needs are so great. If a beggar in the street asks for a copper, he may get it. If he were even to venture to ask for silver, he might gain it. But if he asked for thousand pound notes he might stand a long time in the street corner before he would find one who would supply him. Now, sir, my prayer is for great things—I need the Savior's blood upon my conscience. I need the Holy Spirit Himself, to renew my nature. I need the whole Godhead to come and bless me. I need heaven itself, nothing short of that will satisfy me. And how can I hope that such a great prayer as mine will be answered?" Ah, dear soul, you are dealing with a great God, and a great Savior, and great promises. Do not be afraid to ask for great things; rather be afraid of limiting the Holy One of Israel. Open your mouth wide and He will fill it.

Ah, and I think I hear one exclaim, "He may well despise my prayer, for my faith is so weak. If I had more faith, I think then, He would listen to me." Well, but the Lord has never said anywhere that He despises little faith. Can you find a passage of Scripture in which He says, "I will trample on the bruised reed, and I will quench the smoking flax"? If you have ever read a passage of Scripture like that, I never have. The whole run of the Bible, goes the other way. "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arms, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with

young.” It seems that the poor and the weak are the chief objects of His care, and are not, therefore, rejected. Suppose He bruised and crushed the mustard seed, where would be the tree that is to grow out of it? Suppose He despised the day of small things, where would the day of great things be? “Behold your King comes, meek and lowly, riding upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.” And as He comes, the little children gather round Him, and they say, “Hosanna.” Look, He does not rebuke them. Rather does He say, “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings have You ordained strength, because of Your enemies.” Now, your faith is like a little child. God will grant you full manhood eventually, but even now He does not despise your feebleness. He looks upon it with favor and He hears your prayers.

Now, somewhere in this place there is a young man in the same condition as that in which I was found some twenty-three years ago. He has learned to weep in secret before God, and pray for mercy. But he has not found it yet, and he is tempted to give it all up. Listen, dear brother, to this Word—“He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.” Cry on and look to Jesus, and you shall find all your destitute soul needs. And one of these days, you who have learned to pray shall learn to praise and bless the prayer-answering God, who did not allow the soul of the destitute to perish. May the Lord visit you at this moment, and give you peace!

IV. Our last head is to be this: our text affords to the destitute beggar A MOST COMFORTABLE ASSURANCE. “He will regard the prayer of the destitute.” Now, beloved whatever is in Scripture we accept as infallible truth. We dare not doubt when God speaks. If He says it is so, it is so. Others may doubt the inspiration of Scripture, but we have not gone that length yet. Now, poor destitute sinner, if you believe the Scripture to be inspired believe this passage—“He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will not despise their prayer.” Now, there is something about this text I want you to notice, namely, that God, in order that destitute sinners should never doubt His willingness to hear their prayers, has left this on record with a very special note appended to it. I will read you the note, which is in the 18th verse. “This shall be written for the generation to come, and the people who shall be created shall praise the Lord.” You see the Lord not only said that He would regard the prayer of the destitute, but He added, “This shall be written,” because, when a poor soul is in doubt and fear, there is nothing like having it in black and white. God has said it, but, says He, they shall not merely go by their ears, they shall see with their eyes. “This shall be written.” Look at it. There it stands before you, written by the pen of inspiration, no doubt about it. “This shall be written for the generation to come,” that is, for you. It was not merely true in David’s time, or in Hezekiah’s time, but this shall be written for the generation to come—written for you and for your children, that God will hear the prayer of the destitute. Blessed be His name for that. I recommend, the next time you kneel down to pray, to put your finger on this verse, and say, “Lord, I have Your Word for it. No, more, I have your writing for it. Behold I put it to You—You have said, ‘This shall be written.’ O, fulfill this written pledge to me.” When a man brings my own handwriting to me, and says, “You promised me, and here is the writing,” I cannot get away from it. And how shall the Lord draw back from what He has said, “This shall be written for the generation to come”? Oh, it must stand true. Be of good courage, poor seeking sinner, God will hear you. Remember too, that when the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, He used to choose for His associates the destitute. “This man receives sinners,” they said, “and eats with them.” “Then all the publicans and sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.” He would sometimes sit in the house of the Pharisee, but while He was there His heart was after the poor woman that came behind Him and washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, for His heart was always with needy sinners. Upon the self-righteous He looked with an eye of indignation. “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees,” He said. But to poor guilty sinners He always looked with eyes of tenderness. He was ready and willing to receive them. In fact, it was His life’s work to seek and to save that which was lost. Do not be afraid to come then. Jesus has made a feast, and has not called in His rich friends or acquaintances. But He has brought in the poor, the lame and the blind, for they cannot repay Him, but will forever love Him. And such are you. Come, and welcome! Come, and welcome! Jesus cast out none when He was here. He will cast out none that come to Him now.

Remember, in the matter of praying, that God loves to hear sinners pray. We may be quite sure of that, because He teaches them how to pray. There are passages in Scripture where God even puts the words into sinners' mouths. He says, "Take with you words, and say unto Him, 'Receive us graciously, and love us freely, so will we render the sacrifices of our lips.'" God must be very fond of prayer when He teaches us how to pray. Do not be afraid, therefore, to pour out those broken sentences which God the Holy Spirit has taught you.

He has never despised a sinner's prayer yet. Search and look down the chronicles of His Word, and see what sinner He ever rejected. Look round among your kinsfolk and acquaintances, and find out one who has ever fled to Him for mercy, and was repulsed. I appeal to those who are saved on earth, and they will tell you that it was infinite love and mercy that accepted them. If I could appeal to the white-robed hosts in heaven, they would all tell you that like yourselves, they were destitute. They had to come *in forma pauperis* before the Lord, and He did not despise them, nor disregard their prayers.

I wish I could take a poor trembler by the hand, and say, "Dear brother, come with me." Gladly I would do it. I have a hope of heaven this morning, and I will tell you what it is. I am as destitute this day, of all righteousness of my own as anyone here can be. My eyes are fixed upon the Lord Jesus on the accursed tree. There He was, my substitute, and I trust in Him and in Him alone. Now, if you are enabled by the Spirit of God to look right away from yourself and your misery to Christ Jesus, the sinner's Savior, you shall have this very morning, the peace of God which passes all understanding to keep your heart and mind, and you shall know that you are saved.

I am going to close with a remark upon another subject. You will have noticed, I dare say, that the whole of this verse is connected with the building up of Zion. Therefore there must be some connection between the two, and it is just this—the church of God must never expect to see great revivals, or to see the world converted to Christ till she comes before the Lord as *destitute*. I am afraid that when we plead the most with God, we still feel we are a very respectable community of Christians with a large number of ministers, and a number of wealthy laymen, a large amount of chapel property, and a good deal of power and influence. You say, "I am rich and increased in goods." It may be that all this is the sign of your poverty, and we may be naked, and poor, and miserable. But when we get right down and feel, we are nothing and nobody and we could not save a soul if our lives depended upon it, that we are weak as water and must come to God as utterly impotent apart from the power of the Spirit of God, then will the Lord appear in His glory. And His destitute church shall become rich in His riches, strong in His strength, and victorious in His might. We must be brought down. I see among the various denominations too much emulation as to their position. We stand in this position, and they in the other, and the voluntaries are doing such wonders. But, brethren, we are just a lot of poor unworthy sinners, who owe everything we have to the sovereign grace of God. And what we are to do for God must be accomplished, not by might nor by power, but by His Spirit. When we feel this, the building of Zion will come, but not till then. The Lord send it!

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 102.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—146, 554, 544.

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